

Park Newspaper Article Template

Articles in park visitor guides or newspapers provide an opportunity to deliver a wilderness message to diverse audiences. The Education Subcommittee of the NPS National Wilderness Steering Committee recommends using the following guidelines to construct an article about wilderness.

Article Goal and Objectives

Goal: To increase visitor knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the National Wilderness Preservation System and park-specific designated wilderness.

Objectives:

1. Define wilderness according to the Wilderness Act (1964).
2. Explain that the National Park Service, and areas of specific park units, are part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.
3. Explain the significance of designated wilderness in the park.
4. State at least one difference between designated wilderness and other public lands (e.g., part of the NWPS, designated by an Act of Congress, requires different mind set of managers and visitors, management guidance derives from the Wilderness Act, no mechanized transport or motorized equipment, all management actions adhere to minimum tool analysis, etc.)
5. List at least two tangible and/or intangible benefits of wilderness (e.g., watershed, habitat for wildlife including threatened and endangered plants and animals, “living laboratory,” baseline “control” research area, preservation of cultural artifacts and historic landscape, renewal of human spirit, escape for humans from mechanized/technological society, primitive recreation, solitude, physical and mental challenge, local significance, revenue for local communities, scenic beauty, connection to American history, preserved for future generations to enjoy and make decisions about, etc.)

Further Guidance

- Tie article into park themes.
- Address current resource issues.
- Consult Interpretive Development Program module 230, “Successful Interpretive Writing.”

Sample Article

Utilizing the above guidelines, the following sample article was written for the Shenandoah National Park visitor guide.

Park Sub-theme: Shenandoah National Park’s protected natural resources are affected by constantly changing societal and individual values that shape visitor interactions and individual experiences with the park.

Article Theme: Designated wilderness is an American legacy.

Universal: Legacy (inheritance, heritage, family trust, bequest, heirloom)

Tangibles: Wilderness, the Wilderness Act, National Wilderness Preservation System, specific resources of wilderness.

Intangibles: Wilderness, dream, system, solitude, future generations, patriotism, legacy, history.

Title: Forever Wild

Forever Wild

What gifts have been given to you by preceding generations? Are there family stories that you have heard over and over again? What will you pass on to the next generation?

When President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act on September 3, 1964, he stated, “If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning . . .” In the Wilderness Act, the American people preserved a legacy of wilderness to be passed on to future generations.

Wilderness is an American idea, evolving from our unique frontier history. Throughout the history of America, stories of wild lands from Daniel Boone to the Lewis and Clark expedition influenced the formation of the nation’s character.

As the country grew and developed, wild lands diminished. Citizens spoke up to preserve remaining natural areas. In 1964 the U.S. Congress passed a law that gives the strongest conservation protection possible to selected areas of our public lands – the Wilderness Act. The desire to preserve an American legacy of wilderness is captured in the first words of the Act:

In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas in the United States . . . leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.

The Wilderness Act recognized wilderness as a place and an experience: “A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man . . .” “Untrammelled” means unrestricted, unconfined, or free. In this word rests the connection of our American heritage and our hope for the future with how we manage wild lands in the present.

It may be hard to believe that just 90 miles from our nation’s capital there is untrammelled land, yet 40 percent of Shenandoah National Park is designated as wilderness. Viewed as vistas along historic Skyline Drive and experienced while hiking on a trail, Shenandoah’s wilderness area preserves resources both seen and unseen. Clean water flows from the wilderness area into local reservoirs. Plants and animals survive in a habitat free of development. There are opportunities for solitude and escape from our modern mechanized society. Overgrown apple orchards and pieces of pottery provide a glimpse into the human history of the area. These wilderness resources and experiences are preserved for present and future generations to explore.

Shenandoah is just one part of the wilderness legacy, for there are hundreds of wilderness areas across the United States. Congress has designated over 100 million acres of public land as wilderness, creating a National Wilderness Preservation System.

Wilderness was passed on to us by individuals, known and unknown, who worked to preserve their dream, an American dream, of public lands protected by law to be forever wild. The primary author of the Wilderness Act, Howard Zahniser, stated: “The wilderness that has come to us from the eternity of the past we have the boldness to project into the eternity of the future.”

You have inherited a legacy of wilderness. How will you pass wilderness on to future generations?